

THE MAN OF ONE SUBJECT

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."
1 Corinthians 2:2.*

PAUL was a very determined man and whatever he undertook he carried out with all his heart. Once let him say, "I determined," and you might be sure of a vigorous course of action. "This one thing I do" was always his motto. The unity of his soul and its mighty resoluteness were the main features of his character. He had once been a great opposer of Christ and His cross and had shown his opposition by furious persecutions. It was not so very much to be wondered at that when he became a disciple of this same Jesus, whom he had persecuted, he should become a very ardent one and bring all his faculties to bear upon the preaching of Christ crucified. His conversion was so marked, so complete, so thorough, that you expect to see him as energetic for the truth as once he had been violent against it.

A man so whole-hearted as Paul, so thoroughly capable of concentrating all his forces as the apostle was—and so entirely won over to the faith of Jesus—was likely to enter into his cause with all his heart and soul. And thus he was determined to know nothing else but his crucified Lord. Yet do not think that the apostle was a man easily absorbed in one thought. He was, above the most of men, a reasoner, calm, judicious, candid, and prudent. He looked at things in their bearings and relations and was not a stickler for minor matters. Perhaps even more than might perfectly be justified, he made himself all things to all men that he might by all means win some, and therefore any determination which he came to was only arrived at after taking counsel with wisdom. He was not a zealot of that class which may be likened to a bull which shuts its eyes and runs straight forward, seeing nothing which may lie to the right or to the left—he looked all round him, calmly, quietly, and though he did, in the end, push forward in a direct line at his one objective, yet it was with his eyes wide open, knowing perfectly what he was doing and believing that he was doing the best and wisest thing for the cause which he desired to promote. If, for instance, to have opened his ministry at Corinth by proclaiming the unity of the Godhead, or by philosophically working out the possibilities of God's becoming incarnate—if these had been the wisest plans for spreading the Redeemer's kingdom—Paul would have adopted them. But he looked at them all and having examined them with all care, he could not see that anything was to be gained by indirect preaching, or by keeping back a part of the truth. Therefore he determined to go straight forward and promote the gospel by proclaiming the gospel. Whether men would hear or whether they would forbear, he resolved to come to the point at once and preach the cross in its naked simplicity. Instead of knowing a great many things which might have led up to the main subject, he would not know anything in Corinth save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Paul might have said, "I had better beat about the bush and educate the people up to a certain point before I come to my main point. To lay bare my ultimate intent at the first might be to spread the net in the sight of the birds and frighten them away. I will be cautious and reticent and will take them with guile, enticing them on in pursuit of truth." But not so—looking at the matter all round as a prudent man should, he comes to this resolve, that he will know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I would to God that the "culture" we hear of in these days, and all this boasted "modern thought," would come to the same conclusion. This most renowned and scholarly divine, after reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting everything as few men could do, yet came to this as to the issue of it all—"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." May God grant that the critical skill of our contemporaries and their laborious consideration may land them on the same shore by the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

I. Our first consideration, this morning, will be, WHAT WAS THIS SUBJECT TO WHICH PAUL DETERMINED TO SHUT HIMSELF UP WHILE PREACHING TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH? That subject was one, though it may also be divided into two—it was *the person and the work* of our Lord Jesus Christ—laying special stress upon that part of His work which is always the most objected to, namely, His substitutionary sacrifice, His redeeming death. Paul preached Christ in all His positions, but he especially dwelt upon Him as the crucified one.

The apostle first preached his great Master's *person*—Jesus Christ. There was no equivocation about Paul when he spoke of Jesus of Nazareth. He held Him up as a real Man, no phantom, but one who was crucified, dead, and buried—and rose again from the dead in actual bodily existence. There was no hesitation about His Godhead either. Paul preached Jesus as the Son of the Highest, as the wisdom and the power of God, as one “in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” You never doubted when you heard Paul, but that he believed in the divinity and the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ—and worshipped and adored Him as very God of very God. He preached His person with all clearness of language and warmth of love. The Christ of God was all in all to Paul.

The apostle spoke equally clearly upon the Redeemer's *work*, especially laying stress upon His death. “Horrible!” said the Jew, “How can you boast in a Man who died a felon's death and was cursed because He was hanged on a tree!” “Ah,” said the Greek, “tell us no more about your God that died! Babble no longer about resurrection. We never shall believe such unmitigated foolishness.” But Paul did not, therefore, put these things into the background and say, “Gentlemen, I will begin with telling you of the life of Christ and of the excellency of His example—and by these means I shall hope to tempt you onward to the conclusion that there was something divine in Him and then afterwards to the further conclusion that He made an atonement for sin.” No, he began with His blessed person and distinctly described Him as he had been taught by the Holy Spirit. And as to His crucifixion, he put it in the front and made it the main point. He did not say, “Well, we will leave the matter of His death for a time,” or, “We will consider it under the aspect of a martyrdom by which He completed His testimony.” No. Paul gloried in the crucified Redeemer, the dead and buried Christ, the sin-bearing Christ, the Christ made a curse for us, as it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” This was the subject to which he confined himself at Corinth—beyond this he would not stir an inch. He does not merely determine to keep his preaching to that point, but he resolves not even to know any other subject. He would keep his mind fast closed among them to any thought but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Very unwise this must have seemed. Call in a council of worldly wise men and they will condemn such a rash course, for, in the first place, such preaching would drive away all the Jews. Holding, as the Jews did, the Old Testament Scriptures and receiving, therefore, a great deal of teaching about the Messiah and holding very firmly to the unity of the Godhead, the Jews had gone a long way towards the light—and if Paul had kept back the objectionable points a little while, might he not have drawn them a little further—and so by degrees have landed them at the cross? Wise men would have remarked upon the hopefulness of the Israelites, if handled with discretion, and their advice would have been, “We do not say, renounce your sentiments, Paul, but disguise them for a little while. Do not say what is untrue, but at the same time be a little reticent about what is true, or else you will drive away these hopeful Jews.” The apostle yielded to no such policy. He would not win either Jew or Gentile by keeping back the truth, for he knew that such converts are worthless. If the man who is near the kingdom will be driven right away from the gospel by hearing the unvarnished truth, that is no guide as to Paul's duty. He knows that the gospel must be a “savor of death unto death” to some as well as of “life unto life” unto others and therefore whichever may occur, he must deliver his own soul. Consequences are not for Paul, but for the Lord. It is ours to speak the truth boldly and in every case we shall be a sweet savor unto God. But to compromise, in the hope of making converts, is to do evil that good may come—and this is never to be thought of for an instant.

Another would say, “But, Paul, if you do this, you cause opposition. Do you not know that Christ crucified is a byword and a reproach to all thinking men? Why, at Corinth there are a number of philosophers and I tell you, it will create unbounded ridicule if you so much as open your mouth about the Crucified One and His resurrection. Do not you remember on Mars' Hill how they mocked you when you spoke upon that theme? Do not provoke their contempt. Argue with their Gnosticism and show

them that you too are a philosopher. Be all things to all men. Be learned among the learned and rhetorical among the orators. By these means you will make many friends and by degrees your conciliatory conduct will bring them to accept the gospel." The apostle shakes his head, puts down his foot, and with firm voice utters his decision, "I have *determined*," he says, "I have already made up my mind. Your counsels and advice are lost upon me. I have *determined* to know nothing among the Corinthians—however learned the Gentile portion of them may be, or however fond of rhetoric—save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He stands to that.

It is further worthy of note that the apostle had resolved that his subject should so engross the attention of his hearers that he would not even speak it with excellence of speech or garnish it with man's wisdom. You have heard perhaps of the famous painter who drew the likeness of James I. He represented him sitting in a bower with all the flowers of the season blooming around him—and nobody ever took the smallest notice of the king's visage for all eyes were charmed by the excellence of the flowers. Paul resolved that he would have no flowers at all. The portrait which he sketched would be Christ crucified, the bare facts and doctrine of the cross without so much as a single flower from the poets or the philosophers. Some of us need not be very loud in our resolution to avoid fine speech, for we may have but slender gifts in that direction. But the apostle was a man of fine natural powers and of vast attainments—a man whom the Corinthian critics could not have despised—and yet he threw away all ornaments to let the unadorned beauty of the cross win its own way.

As he would not add flowers, so he would not darken the cross with smoke, for there is a way of preaching the gospel amid a smother of mystification and doubt so that men cannot receive it. A numerous band of men are always boiling and stirring up a huge philosophic caldron which steams with dense vapor, beclouding the cross of Christ most horribly. Alas for that wisdom which conceals the wisdom of God, it is the guiltiest form of folly. Some people preach Christ as I have seen representations of a man-of-war ship in battle. The painter painted nothing but the smoke and you have said, "Where is the ship?" Well, if you looked long you might discern a fragment of the top of one of the masts and perhaps a portion of the boom. The ship was there, no doubt, but the smoke concealed it. So there may be Christ in some men's preaching, but there is such a cloud of thinking, such a dense pall of profundity, such a horrid smoke of philosophy that you cannot see the Lord. Paul painted beneath a clear sky. He would have no learned obscurity. He determined not to know how to speak after the manner of the orators, not to know how to think deeply according to the mode of the philosophers, but only to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified—and just to set Him forth in His own natural beauties unadorned. He dispensed with those accessories which are so apt to attract the eyes of the mind from the central point—Christ crucified. "A rash experiment," says one. Ah, brethren, it is the experiment of faith and faith is justified of all her children. If we rely upon the power of mere persuasion, we rely upon that which is born of the flesh. If we depend upon the power of logical argument, we again rely upon that which is born of men's reason. If we trust to poetic expressions and attractive turns of speech, we look to carnal means. But if we rest upon the naked omnipotence of a crucified Savior, upon the innate power of the wondrous deed of love which was consummated upon Calvary—and if we believe that the Spirit of God will make this the instrument for the conversion of men, the experiment cannot possibly end in failure.

But oh, my brethren, what a task this must have been for Paul! He was not like many of us who are neither familiar with philosophy, nor capable of oratory. He was so great a master of both that he must have found it necessary to keep himself constantly in check. I think I can see him, every now and then—when a deeply intellectual thought has come across his mind and a beautiful mode of utterance has suggested itself—reining himself up and saying to his mind, "I will leave these deep thoughts for the letter to the Romans. I will give them all this in the eighth chapter. But as for these Corinthians, they shall have nothing but Christ crucified, for they are so carnal, so grossly slavish before talent that they will run away with the idea that my excellent way of putting the truth was the power of it. They shall have Christ only—and only Christ. They are children and I must speak to them as such. They are mere babes in Christ and have need of milk—and milk alone must I give them. They claim to be clever and learned but they are conceited, high-minded, full of divisions and controversies. I will give them nothing but 'the old, old story of Jesus and His love,' and I will tell them that story simply as to a little child." Boundless love to their souls thus made him concentrate his testimony upon the one central point of Jesus crucified.

Thus I have shown you what his subject was.

II. Now, secondly, **ALTHOUGH PAUL THUS CONCENTRATED HIS ENERGIES UPON ONE POINT OF TESTIMONY, IT WAS QUITE SUFFICIENT FOR HIS PURPOSE.** If the apostle had aimed at pleasing an intelligent audience, Christ and Him crucified would not have done at all. If again he had designed to set himself up as a profound teacher, he would naturally have looked out for something new, something a little more dazzling than the person and work of the Redeemer. And if Paul had desired, as I am afraid some of my brothers do, to collect together a class of highly independent minds which is, I believe, the euphemism for free-thinkers—to draw together a select church of the men of culture and intellect, which generally means a club of men who despise the gospel—he certainly would not have kept to preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This order of men would deny him all hope of success with such a theme. They would assure him that such preaching would only attract the poorer sort and the less educated—the servant maids and the old women. But Paul would not have been disconcerted by such observations, for he loved the poorest and feeblest souls and besides, he knew that what had exercised power over his own educated mind was likely to have power over other intelligent people, and so he kept to the doctrine of the cross, believing that he had therein an instrument which would effectually accomplish his one desire with all classes of men. Brethren, what did Paul wish to do? Paul desired, first of all, to awaken sinners to a sense of sin—and what has ever accomplished this so perfectly as the doctrine that sin was laid upon Christ and caused His death? The sinner, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, sees at once that sin is not a trifle that it is not to be forgiven without atonement, but must be followed by penalty, borne by someone or other. When the guilty one has seen the Son of God bleeding to death in pangs unutterable in consequence of his sin, he has learned that sin is an enormous and crushing burden. If even the Son of God cries out beneath it, if His death agony rends the heavens and shakes earth, what an awful evil sin must be. What must it involve upon my soul if in my own person I shall be doomed to bear its consequences? Thus the sinner rightly argues and thus is he aroused to a sense of guilt.

But Paul wanted also to awaken in the minds of the guilty that humble hope which is the great instrument of leading men to Jesus. He desired to make them hope that forgiveness might be given consistently with justice. Oh, brethren, Christ crucified is the one ray of light that can penetrate the thick darkness of despair and make a penitent heart hope for pardon from the righteous Judge. Need a sinner ever doubt when he has once seen Jesus crucified? When he understands that there is pardon for every transgression through the bleeding wounds of Jesus, is not the best form of hope at once kindled in his bosom and is he not led to say, “I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned”?

Paul longed, yet further, to lead men to actual faith in Jesus Christ. Now, faith in Jesus Christ can only come by preaching Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing, but the hearing must be upon the subject concerning which the faith is to deal. Would you make believers in Christ, preach Christ. The things of Christ, applied by the Spirit, lead men to put their reliance upon Christ. Nor was that all. Paul wanted men to forsake their sins and what should lead them to hate evil as much as seeing the sufferings of Jesus on account of it? You and I know the power of a bleeding Savior to make us take revenge upon sin. What indignation, what searching of heart, what stern resolve, what bitterness of regret, what deep repentance have we felt when we have seen that our sins became the nails, the hammer, the spear, yes, the executioners of the Well-Beloved?

And Paul longed to train up in Corinth a church of consecrated men, full of love, full of self-denial, a holy people, zealous for good works. And let me ask you, what is more necessary to preach to any man to promote his sanctification and his consecration than Jesus Christ who has redeemed us and so made us forever His servants? What argument is stronger than the fact that we are not our own, for we are bought with a price? I say that Paul had, in Christ crucified, a subject equal to his objective. He had a subject that would meet the case of every man, however degraded or however cultured, and a subject which would be useful to men in the first hours of the new birth and equally useful when they were made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. He had a subject for today and tomorrow, and a subject for next year, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He had in the crucified Jesus a subject for the prince’s palace and a subject for the peasant’s hut, a subject for the mar-

ket place and a subject for the academy, for the heathen temple and for the synagogue. Wherever he might go, Christ would be both to Jew and Gentile, to bond and free, the wisdom of God and the power of God—and that not to one form of beneficial influence alone—but unto full salvation to everyone that believes.

III. But I must pass on to a third remark, that THE APOSTLE'S CONFINING HIMSELF TO THIS SUBJECT COULD NOT POSSIBLY DO HARM. You know, brethren, that when men dwell exclusively upon one thing they get pretty strong there, but they generally become very weak in other points. Hence a man of one thought only is generally described as riding a hobby. Well, this was Paul's hobby, but it was a sort of hobby which a man may ride without any injury to himself or his neighbor. He will be none the less a complete man if he surrenders himself wholly and only to this one theme.

But let me remark that Christ crucified is the only subject of which this can be said. Let me show you that it is so. You know a class of ministers who preach doctrine—and doctrine only. Their mode of preaching resembles the counting of your fingers—"one, two, three, four, five," and for a variety, "five, four, three, two, one"—always a certain set of great truths and no others. What is the effect of this ministry? Well, generally to breed a generation of men who think they know everything, but really do not know much—very decided and so far, so good—but very narrow, very exclusive, very bigoted and so far, so bad. You cannot preach doctrine alone without contracting your own mind and that of your hearers.

There are others who preach experience only. They are very good people. I am not condemning either them or their doctrinal friends, but they also fall into mischief. Some of them take the lower scale of experience and they tell us that nobody can be a child of God unless he feels the horrible character of his inbred sin and groans daily. We used to hear a good deal of that some years ago; there is less of it now. Am I wrong in saying that this teaching trains up a race of men who show their humility by sitting in judgement upon all who cannot groan down to as deep a note as they can?

Another class has lately arisen who preach experience, but theirs is always upon the high key. They soar aloft, as I think, a little in the balloon line. They own only the bright side of experience. They have nothing to do with its darkness and death. For them there are no nights and they sing through perpetual summer days. They have conquered sin and they have ignored themselves. *So they say*, but we should not have thought so if they had not told us so; on the contrary, we might have fancied that they had a very vivid idea of themselves and their own attainments. I hope I am mistaken, but it has appeared to some of us poor fallible beings that in some beloved brethren self has grown marvelously big of late. Certainly their conversations and preaching largely consist of very wonderful declarations of their own admirable condition. I should be pleased to learn of their progress in grace, *if it is real*, but I had sooner have made the discovery myself, or have heard it from somebody besides themselves, for there is an inspired proverb which says, "Let another praise you, and not your own lips," and for my part, if any other man thought it right to praise me, I would rather that he held his tongue, for man-magnifying is a poor business. Let the Lord alone be magnified. I think it is clear that grave faults arise from exclusively preaching an inner life instead of preaching Christ, who is life itself.

Another class of ministers have preached the precepts and little else. We need these men as we need the others—they are all useful and act as antidotes to each other—but their ministries are not complete. If you hear preaching about duty and command, it is very proper. But if it is the only theme, the teaching becomes very legal in the long run. And after a while, the true gospel, which has the power to make us keep the precepts, gets flung into the background—and the precepts are not kept after all. Do, do, do, generally ends in nothing being done.

If a brother were to undertake to preach the ordinances only, like those who are always extolling what they are pleased to call the holy sacraments—well, you know where that teaching goes—it has a tendency towards the southeast—and its chosen line runs across the city of Rome.

Moreover, beloved brother, even if you preach Jesus Christ, you must not keep to any other phase of Him but that which Paul took, namely, "Him crucified," for under no other aspect may you exclusively regard Him. For instance, the preaching of the Second Advent, which in its place and proportion is admirable, has been by some taken out of its place, and made the end-all and be-all of their ministry. That, you see, is not what Paul had selected and it is not a safe selection. In many cases, sheer fanaticism has

been the result of exclusively dwelling upon prophecy and probably more men have gone mad on that subject than on any other religious question. Whether any man could ever become fanatical about Christ crucified I cannot say, I have never heard of such an instance. Whether a man ever went insane with love to the crucified Redeemer I do not know, but I have never met such a case. If I should ever go crazy, I should like it to be in that direction, and I should like to bite a great many more, for what a blessed subject it would be for one to be carried away with—to become unreasonably absorbed in Christ crucified—to have gone out of your senses with faith in Jesus. The fact is, it never can injure the mind, it is a doctrine which may be heard forever and will be always fresh, new, and suitable to the whole of our manhood.

I say that the keeping to this doctrine cannot do hurt and the reason is this—it contains all that is vital within itself. Keep within the limits of Christ, and Him crucified, and you have brought before men all the essentials for this life and for the life to come. You have given them the root out of which may grow both branch and flower and fruit of holy thought, word, and deed. Let a man know Christ crucified and he knows Him who to know is life eternal. This is a subject which does not awaken one part of the man and send the other part to sleep. It does not kindle his imagination and leave his judgement uninstructed, nor feed his intellect and starve his heart. There is not a faculty of our nature but what Christ crucified affects for good. The perfect manhood of Christ crucified affects mind, heart, memory, imagination, thought, everything. As in milk there are all the ingredients necessary for sustaining life, so in Christ crucified there is everything that is needed to nurture the soul. Even as the hand of David's chief minstrel touched every chord of his ten-stringed harp, so Jesus brings sweet music out of our entire manhood.

There is also this to be said about preaching Christ exclusively, that it will never produce animosities. It will not impregnate men's minds with questions and contentions as those nice points do which some are so fond of dealing with. When certain questions are settled by my judgement and by your judgement, and by a third and a fourth man's judgement, a contest is sure to ensue. But he who stands at Christ's cross and stays there, he stands where he may embrace the whole brotherhood of true Christians, for we are perfectly joined together in one mind and judgement there. There is no vaunting of man's judgement at the cross. "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Christ," comes from not keeping to Jesus crucified. But if we keep to the cross as guilty sinners needing cleansing through the precious blood and finding all our salvation there, we shall not have time to set ourselves up as religious leaders and to cause divisions in the church of Christ. Was there ever yet a sect created in Christendom by the preaching of Christ crucified? No, my brethren, sects are created by the preaching of something over and above this, but this is the soul and marrow of Christianity and consequently, the perfect bond of love which holds Christians together.

IV. I shall not say more, but pass on to my last reflection, which is this—Because then Paul made this his one sole subject among the Corinthians and he did no hurt by doing so, which cannot be said of any other subject, I COMMEND TO YOU THAT WE SHOULD, ALL OF US, MAKE THIS THE MAIN SUBJECT OF OUR THOUGHTS, PREACHING, AND EFFORTS.

Unconverted men and women, to you I speak first. To you I have nothing else to preach but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Paul knew there were great sinners at Corinth, for it was common all over the then world to call a licentious man a Corinthian. They were a people who pushed laxity and lasciviousness of manners to the greatest possible excess, yet among them Paul knew nothing but Christ and Him crucified, because all that the greatest sinner can possibly need is to be found there. You have nothing in yourself, sinner, and you need not wish for anything to carry to Jesus. You tell me you know nothing about the profound doctrines of the gospel—you need not know them when coming to Christ. The one thing you need to know is this—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save sinners and whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. I shall be glad for you to be further instructed in the faith and to know the heights and depths of that love which passes knowledge, but just now the one thing you need to know is Jesus Christ crucified. If you never get beyond that, if your mind should be of so feeble a cast that anything deeper than this you would never be able to grasp, I for one shall feel no distress whatever—for you will have found that which will deliver you from the power of sin and from the punishment of it—and that which will take you up to heaven to dwell where that same

Jesus who was crucified sits enthroned at the right hand of God. Oh, dear broken heart, if you will ever find healing, it is in those wounds. If you ever find rest, you must have it from those pierced hands. If you ever hear absolution, it must be spoken from those same lips which said so sweetly, "It is finished." God forbid that we should know anything among sinners except Christ and Him crucified. Look to Him and Him only, and you shall find rest unto your souls.

As for you, my brethren and sisters who know Christ, I have this to say to you—keep this to the front and nothing else but this, for it is against this that the enemy rages. That part of the line of battle which is most fiercely assailed by the enemy is sure to be that which he knows to be most important to carry. Men hate those they fear. The antagonism of the enemies of the gospel is mainly against the cross. From the very first it was so. They cried, "Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe in Him." They will write us pretty lives of Christ and tell us what an excellent man He was, and do our Lord such homage as their Judas' lips can afford Him. They will also take His Sermon on the Mount and say what a wonderful insight He had into the human heart, and what a splendid code of morals He taught, and so on. "We will be Christians" they say, "but the dogma of atonement we utterly reject." Our answer is, we do not care one farthing what they have to say about our Master if they deny His substitutionary sacrifice. Whether they give Him wine or vinegar is a small question so long as they reject the claims of the Crucified. The praises of unbelievers are sickening. Who needs to hear polluted lips lauding *Him*? Such sugared words are very like those which came out of the mouth of the devil when he said, "You Son of the Highest," and Jesus rebuked him and said "Hold your peace and come out of him." Even thus would we say to unbelievers who extol Christ's life—"Hold your peace! We know your enmity, disguise it as you may. Jesus is the Savior of men or He is nothing. If you will not have Christ crucified you cannot have Him at all." My brothers in Jesus, let us glory in the blood of Jesus. Let it be conspicuous as though it were sprinkled upon the lintel and the two side posts of our doors. And let the world know that redemption by blood is written upon the innermost tablets of our hearts.

Brethren, this is the test point of every teacher. When a fish goes bad, they say it first stinks at the head and certainly when a preacher becomes heretical, it is always about Christ. If he is not clear about Jesus crucified and you hear one sermon from him—that is your misfortune. But if you go and hear him again, and hear another like the first, it will be your fault. Go a third time, and it will be your crime. If any man is doubtful about Christ crucified, recollect Hart's couplet, for it is a truth—

*"You cannot be right in the rest.
Unless you think rightly of Him."*

I do not need to examine men upon all the doctrines of the Westminster Assembly's Confession. I begin here, "What do you think of Christ?" If you cannot answer that question, go and publish your own views where you like, but you and I are wide as the poles asunder. Neither do I wish to have fellowship with you. We must have plain speaking here.

It is "Christ crucified" which God blesses to conversion. God blessed William Huntingdon to the conversion of souls—I am sure of that, though I am no Huntingdonian. He blessed John Wesley to the conversion of souls. I am quite as clear about that, though I am not a Wesleyan. The point upon which the Lord blessed them both was that in which they bore testimony to Christ—and you shall find that in proportion as Jesus Christ's atonement is in a sermon, it is the lifeblood of that sermon—and is that which God sanctifies to the conversion of the souls of men. Therefore keep it always prominent.

And I ask you now, my brethren, one more thing. Is not Christ and Him crucified the thing to live on and the thing to die on? Worldlings can live upon their flimsies. They can delight themselves under their Jonah's gourds while they last. But when a man is depressed in spirit and tortured in body, where does he look? If he is a Christian, where does he fly? Where, indeed, but to Jesus crucified? How often have I been glad to creep into the temple and stand in the poor publican's shoes and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," looking only to that Mercy Seat which Jesus sprinkled with His precious blood? This will do to *die* with. I do not believe we shall die seeking consolation from our peculiar church organizations. Nor shall we die grasping with a dying clutch either ordinance or doctrine by itself. Our soul must live and die on Jesus crucified. Notice all the saints, when they die, whether they do not get back to Calvary's great sacrifice. They believed a great many things. Some of them had many crotchets and whims and oddities, but the main point comes uppermost in death. "Jesus died for me, Jesus died for me"—they

all come to that. Well, where they get at last, do you not think it would be well to go at first? And if that is the bottom of it all, and it certainly is, would it not be as well for us to keep to that? While some are glorying in this and some in that, some have this form of worship and some that, let us say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world.”

Brethren, I commend to you more and more the bringing of the cross of Christ into prominence, because it is this which will weld us more and more closely to one another and will keep us in blessed unity. We cannot all understand those peculiar truths which depend very much upon nice points and shades of meaning in the Greek which only critics can bring out. If you are going in for these pretty things, brother, you must leave behind many of us poor fools, for we cannot go in for these things, and you only puzzle us. I know you have got that dainty point very beautifully in your own mind and you think a great deal of it, and I do not wonder, for it has cost you a good deal of thinking and it shows your powerful discernment. At the same time, do you not think you ought to condescend to some of us who never will, as long as ever we live, take up with these knotty points? Some of our brains are of an ordinary sort. We have to earn our bread and we mingle with ordinary people. We know that two times two will make four, but we are not acquainted with all the ambiguous principles which lie concealed in the lofty philosophy to which you have climbed. I do not know much about it. I do not climb to such elevations myself, and I shall never get up there along with you—might it not be better for the unity of the faith that you would kindly leave some of these things alone, agree better with your friends at home, show more love to your fellow Christians, and attend a little more to commonplace duties? I do not know but what it might do you good, and bring a little of your humility to the front, if you get down there with Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Personally I might know a host of things—I especially might, for everybody tries to teach me something. I get advice by the wagonload—one pulls this ear and one pulls that. Well, I might know a great deal, but I find I should have to leave some of you behind if I went off to these things—and I love you too well for that. I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. If any man will keep to that, I will say, “Give me your hand, my brother. Jesus washed it with His blood as He did mine. Come, brother, let us look up together at the same cross. What do you make of it?” There is a tear in your eye, and there is one in mine, but yet there is a flush of joy upon both our faces because of the dear love that nailed Jesus there. “What shall we do in the sight of this cross?” My brother says, “I will go and win souls,” and I say, “So will I.” He says, “I have one way of speaking,” and I reply, “I have another, for our gifts differ, but we will never clash, for we are serving one Lord and one Master and we will not be divided, either in this world or in that which is to come.” Let Apollos say what he likes, or Paul, or Peter—we will learn from them all and be very glad to do so—but still, from the cross we will not move, but stand fast there—for Jesus is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Corinthians 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—425, 483, 433.**

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